This is a digital copy of a book that was preserved for generations on library shelves before it was carefully scanned by Google as part of a project to make the world's books discoverable online.

It has survived long enough for the copyright to expire and the book to enter the public domain. A public domain book is one that was never subject to copyright or whose legal copyright term has expired. Whether a book is in the public domain may vary country to country. Public domain books are our gateways to the past, representing a wealth of history, culture and knowledge that's often difficult to discover.

Marks, notations and other marginalia present in the original volume will appear in this file - a reminder of this book's long journey from the publisher to a library and finally to you.

Usage guidelines

Google is proud to partner with libraries to digitize public domain materials and make them widely accessible. Public domain books belong to the public and we are merely their custodians. Nevertheless, this work is expensive, so in order to keep providing this resource, we have taken steps to prevent abuse by commercial parties, including placing technical restrictions on automated querying.

We also ask that you:

+ *Make non-commercial use of the files* We designed Google Book Search for use by individuals, and we request that you use these files for personal, non-commercial purposes.
+ *Refrain from automated querying* Do not send automated queries of any sort to Google's system: If you are conducting research on machine translation, optical character recognition or other areas where access to a large amount of text is helpful, please contact us. We encourage the use of public domain materials for these purposes and may be able to help.
+ *Maintain attribution* The Google "watermark" you see on each file is essential for informing people about this project and helping them find additional materials through Google Book Search. Please do not remove it.
+ *Keep it legal* Whatever your use, remember that you are responsible for ensuring that what you are doing is legal. Do not assume that just because we believe a book is in the public domain for users in the United States, that the work is also in the public domain for users in other countries. Whether a book is still in copyright varies from country to country, and we can't offer guidance on whether any specific use of any specific book is allowed. Please do not assume that a book's appearance in Google Book Search means it can be used in any manner anywhere in the world. Copyright infringement liability can be quite severe.

About Google Book Search

Google's mission is to organize the world's information and to make it universally accessible and useful. Google Book Search helps readers discover the world's books while helping authors and publishers reach new audiences. You can search through the full text of this book on the web at `http://books.google.com/`

600079802W

TIME'S WHISPERINGS.

TIME'S WHISPERINGS:

Sonnets and Songs.

BY

GEORGE BARLOW.

AUTHOR OF "THROUGH DEATH TO LIFE," ETC.

BIBLIOTHECA
FEB 1881
BODLEIANA

London:
REMINGTON AND CO.,
5, ARUNDEL STREET, STRAND, W.C.

1880.

[*All Rights Reserved.*]

280. o. 595

CONTENTS.

TIME'S WHISPERINGS.

CONTENTS.

CONTENTS.

IN LIFE, OR IN DEATH?

TIME'S WHISPERINGS.

RIPENING MANHOOD.

Have the old blossoms dwindled—is the past
  Become one distant ever-lessening dream,
Fast-lessening like some vessel's tapering mast
  Seen over wide waves of the ocean-stream ?
  Must passion's joys no more be song's sweet theme ?
Are all Love's tender rosebuds waxing white ?
  And is the gold past but a silver gleam
Soon to shade gently into utter night,
  Soon to be known but by one threadbare beam ?
Is such Love's piteous, unmeasured plight
  Now that Death's feet e'en at life's doorway seem ?
Are all the summers fluttering out of sight
  With bird-like widespread tense sarcastic wings ?
  Is such the message ripening manhood brings ?

Dec. 28, 1879.

ALL THE SUMMERS.

Yea, all the summers ! Are they all departing ?
  Their sweet low music ripples on the blast ;
The tender music leaves the pierced heart smarting—
  Yea, on the waves of sound our soul is cast,
  Remembering every blossom of the past,
Recalling sacred moons long vanished,
  And summer nights whose glory could not last,
And many a maiden's gentle gold-crowned head ;
Ah ! where are all the summers ?—are they dead ?
  Where are the white dear roses ?—are they gone ?
Where are the lush carnations that flamed red
  Amid their nest of stalks grey-blue and wan ?
O all ye sacred summers that are past,
Into my farewell song your music cast !

ALL THE MAIDENS.

And all ye maidens who have filled with pleasure
  The byways and the highways of the years,
Some golden-tressed, some dark-eyed with sweet
    treasure
  Of coal-black locks, now Death the loveless nears,
  Sing your soft silver music in mine ears
Once more; and, lady of the early days,
  Before whose feet I cast all hopes and fears
Of youth, and all my passion for the bays,
List yet again to these far-murmuring lays;
  And let thine eyes fill tenderly, as of old
They filled, when through the moonlit silent ways
  We walked, and watched the slow sea burn to gold
Beneath the rippling flood of splendid light
The soaring moon flung fierce athwart the night.

MY QUEEN.

Thou wast my Queen! Thou badest me achieve
  Fame, and a wreath of laurels for thy sake;
When my sad, lonely footpath thou didst leave,
  Thou badest me my harp with vigour take
  And o'er the strings quick singing fingers shake,
That so thy splendour might be known of men,
  And other hearts with love of thee might break,
As, at thy swift departure, mine broke then.
Have I not, lady, with my fervent pen,
  Rung thy sweet fame around our sea-girt land,
Till the bright waves laughed, echoing again
  My tender praise of eyes, or lip, or hand?
Have I not, sweetheart, since that sad, far time,
Crowned thee with living wreaths of steadfast rhyme?

NOUGHT.

And hast thou nought, O lady of the sea,
  For whom I've traversed such far leagues of song,
No gentle word divine to say to me,
  Now that, like fluttering plumes of birds who throng
  The leafy coverts when June's days are long,
My crowds of linnet-sonnets round thy head
  Chant, and my throstle-poems wail their strong
Lament for thee as vanished—yea, as dead?
Shall not one gracious word of hope be said?
  Art thou as changeful as the meadow-sweet
That blooms divine one day—the next is shed
  In powdery perfumed dust about our feet?
O lady, if my song be worthy thee,
Speak thou one worthy, tender word to me!

OLDER.

Thou art older now—the thoughts and tender dreams
  Of youth have vanished, as the blossoms go
  At the first hint or touch of winter's snow,—
Yea, when the first frost-sparkling grass-blade gleams.
  The old hopes rest in quiet far below
The lowest depth of life's foam-flickering streams,
  And the old fervent passion and its glow
Give place, as sunset to the moon's soft beams.

But lady gentle, thou art with me still—
We wander as of old beside the rill
  That fed the Esk with gold-brown moorland waters;
Again we mark with glee the sudden trout,
Like a red-spotted meteor flashing out—
  Time's sword, for my part, no least memory slaughters.

WHAT IS TIME?

Ah, what is Time? To me it nothing brings
  But the pure sweetness of love's early day
Re-glittering back on calmer sunnier wings,
  Wings more divine with tenfold-radiant ray—
  Yea, every treasure Time would bear away
Unto my soul with tenderer soul-clasp clings,
  And hardly even upon my lips the spray
Of Time I feel—hardly its salt splash stings.

O lady, in the solemn years behind
  I have thy figure like a love-crowned queen,
Watching my course with the old glances kind,
  The old girl-look so tender and serene.
Oh, what are sorrows of the later day,
When o'er youth's meadows fell this golden ray?

YOUTH'S MEADOWS.

Youth's meadows all were bountiful with gold;
  The sweet seas all were laughing in their glee,
Responsive on the beach the breakers rolled—
  Assiduous sang the birds in every tree
  Chanting the wedding, love, of you and me;
For through the realms of nature was it told,
  Yea, signalized through earth eternally
  And through the azure heavens wide and free,
And o'er the yellow furze-crowned breezy wold
Where hand in hand we wandered, love, of old,
  Brushing the heather-sprays that reached the knee
Luxuriant—the clouds parted, fold on fold,
  To let our marriage-pinions glisten through
  The utmost resonant heights of arduous blue.

THE UTMOST RESONANT HEIGHTS.

Yea, all the resonant heights of ether parted,
  We joined the angels in their glittering throng,
Not two, but one—one-souled, one-lipped, one-hearted,
  We passed their gleaming myriad bands among;
  And through our souls the heavenly music stung,
And through our ears the heavenly message sped
  Tender, and round about our hearts it clung;
The gentle whisper of the gentle dead—
  It was as if a nightingale had sung,
It was as if some golden word was said;
The stars our hastening, onward footsteps led—
  Then up the sudden white moon-glory sprung,
And in those heavenly halls we slept and dreamed,
While white upon me thy moon-whiteness gleamed.

THY WHITENESS.

O thou wast white! Beyond all earthly splendour
  Of utmost love thine utter whiteness shone:
Moon-radiant, subtle, sweet, supremely tender,
  Luring with gentle might my passion on—
No singing words can all thy beauty render,
  It gleamed one perfect moment—then 'twas gone!
A lily waved on earth her flower-stalk slender,
  And seemed to smile up at me soft and wan!
But thou hadst vanished, sweet, and never more
Shall I set foot on that far heavenly shore;
  Or see thy whiteness glittering through my sleep.
The lily yet I have—but not thy form,
As for one awful moment, white and warm,
  It mingled into mine in rapture deep.

SONG.—TWO SPIRITS.

Two spirits, mixing, blending,
Went swiftly upward tending
To the skies:
Their golden course no power
Could stay—sweet hour on hour
They uprise.

In heaven's holy night
These spirits, glad and bright,
Became
One perfect spirit-being,
Far, far beyond death seeing,
Earth's pale dominions fleeing
Like a flame.

But back in the sad morn
To earthland they were borne
On slow faint wings—
Slowly, slowly weeping;
But still the chant that sleeping,
They heard, around them rings.

ARE WE FORGOTTEN?

Are we forgotten, when our spirits pass
  The silent doors of all-absorbing death?
Yea, do we mingle with the flowers and grass,
  And draw no more sweet loving human breath?
Lovers have trodden love's mystic path before us,
  And other fair-souled lovers will succeed—
Will mark the same blue skies that once shone o'er us,
  Or haply with the same deep sorrows bleed.

Oh, is there any resting place, a haven
For love's wings sent forth like the pilot raven
  To pierce the shadows, pioneer the tomb?
Hath patient, endless labour any worth,
Abiding value, surety, upon earth,
  Or doth all loving effort end in gloom?

MY SONG.

Yea, what shall be the ending of my song?
  O, listening lady, what wilt thou bestow
Upon thy minstrel pale and worn, but strong,
  With thoughts that burn, and eager lips that glow—
  What fair reward shall I, thy singer, know,
Now that long years have listened to my voice
  And heard thy praises through my numbers flow?
Dost thou not gladden, dost not thou rejoice?
  Must death, with bosom colder than the snow,
Wait and be sole obedient bride to me,
And wilt thou ever turn aside and flee,
  As through our separate lives, with footstep slow
We pace, uncertain what rewards may wait
Beyond death's bitter, unresponsive gate?

SUMMERS HAVE PASSED.

Summers have passed—yea, many a glowing morn,
  And many a moonlit, wonderful soft night
Since thou wast from my eager longing torn;
  Yea, since that day full many a rose-bud bright
  Hath bloomed amid the fields of our delight,
And the great golden stars have glimmered down
  On many passions as they reached their height.
How many loves have granted love's sweet crown,
While love's old petals withered yet and brown
  Remain for me—no hand but thine can give
Bloom to the leaves that darken 'neath thy frown,
  Bloom, and the splendid power to bud and live
With laughing new-born lustre, and divine
Perfume more sweet than rain-kissed eglantine.

THE SAME.

For thou art ever, love, the very same :
  Yea, far beyond the dismal fields of death
  The broad blown plains of flowers have felt thy breath,
And rippled into sheets of blossomy flame.
Death's hand faints back from thee for very shame ;
  Thou art too fair a flower for him to touch,
  Filled with God's gift of beauty over-much
For death to injure, or despair to tame.

Pass death, pass heaven, and search the utmost deep
Where farthest dreams with folded pinions sleep,
  Yea, seek throughout God's uttermost domain,
Yet shalt thou find there no such love as ours,
No wreath like this of death-despising flowers,
  No singing land like that where-o'er we reign.

THY KISS.

When thou didst kiss me in the heavenly dream
  One was I made with every poet fair—
I felt all past pure raptures through me stream:
  Bathed were my temples in Italian air,
  And thou wast Beatrice, and I could wear
Unshrinking on my temples that high crown
  Her lover sole of all men then could bear;
Thy kiss gave strength and pleasure and renown—
  But most of all it gave thine utter soul
  And all its glory to me—yea the whole,
Pouring supreme delight transcending speech
Throughout me, rapture that no words can reach;
  For who can say, sweet love, how sweet thou art,
  Or tell the secrets of a rose's heart?

STRANGE.

How passing strange to think, when we are dead
  The cruel heedless flowers will bloom the same—
White roses, yellow roses, roses red—
  Amid the meads through which we silent came,
  When passion burned throughout us like a flame;
The ferns, the grass, the creamy meadow-sweet,
  Will cluster, knowing not reproach or shame,
Around the passage of new lovers' feet,
And the rich sun will gladden these with heat,
  Not recking how beneath their tread we lie;—
Their faces just as glad a morn will meet
  As we met, equal azure in the sky:
And yet with us the dream no more abides—
Crowning fresh lovers, garlanding new brides.

ONCE.

Once through a sacred mist of golden sleep
  Your spirit like a pure sweet angel came,
And wrapped me in an ecstasy so deep,
  That gone was every sorrow, every shame,
  Swept far for ever by thine onset's flame;
But now the long days widen out before me,
  And perhaps no summer bearing one white rose
Will ever bend with fragrant plumage o'er me,
  But alway shall I dwell 'mid rains and snows—
  A decade of my life will ere long close—
Ten years and more have passed since I beheld
  Thy sweet face—still its beauty round me glows,
And still the fire of passion, vast, unquelled,
  Urges me on towards lands no mortal knows.

Dec. 30, 1879.

THE COMING DECADE.

What shall the coming stormy decade bring ?
  Yea, even the long months of the coming year ?
What flowers for me shall shine in fields of spring,
  Or gladden golden August or the clear
  June days ?—doth any triumph hasten near ?—
Or is my victory pressed between Death's hands,
  And will Death's footstep only bring it here ?
O, whispers reach me from far unseen lands,
Wherein full many a poet-victor stands
  Crowned, glad, divine, triumphant—yea, the singing
Of many voices lifts me—there expands
  Blue sky before my gaze, a message bringing
That bids me wait in peace the final morn,
When I shall pass beyond earth's spears, earth's scorn.

I AM NOT CAREFUL.

I am not careful whether I retain
  The suffrage and the praise the crowd bestow—
My eyes are set beyond earth's valley and plain,
  On meads of pure delight they cannot know.
  Art is my mistress, and her hands of snow
Shall crown me ; if I aught deserve of crowning :
  Shall lift me far above these regions low.
O, never may the present judge me, drowning
  The judgments that from lips of poets flow !
My song is written for lovers, and for skies
And seas and stars and glad suns as they rise—
  To cheer the feet that through the future go—
O heedless am I of the present time—
I look from its mere vales towards mounts sublime.

THE SNOW-CAPPED MOUNTAINS.

Yea, towards God's snow-capped mountains do I raise
  Mine eyes and toward's God's temples lift my voice—
The endless beauty of my love I praise,
  That she too in my singing may rejoice,
Finding immortal pleasure in my lays—
O beautiful her face beneath the bays
  Smiles, when I lift the circlet from mine head;
Forgetting for a season all the ways
  Of song—the paths of suffering fiery-red
  Through which my thorn-pierced footsteps have been
    led,
And all the lonely nights and grievous days—,
  When I forgetting these gaze up instead,
And watch the amorous tender leaves grow green
Touching the unfurrowed forehead of my queen.

SONG.—GREEN AND WHITE.

How soft the gentle bay-leaves shine
  Upon thy forehead white—
Fairer than rose or eglantine,
Or wreaths the woodland fairies twine,
Or pliant tendrils of the vine—
  A sweeter, nobler sight.

And if some leaves are splashed with blood,
  O take it not amiss!
'Mid serried warriors I have stood,
And borne the brunt of battle-flood,
Stemmed many a storm of sorrow rude,
  Since last I felt thy kiss!

Let these few green leaves I have won—
  Yea, green and white and red—
Green, red-splashed, thy white forehead on,
Be dear to thee as if there shone
'Mid rubies, emeralds—diamonds wan
  Circled about thine head!

THOU CANST NOT ESCAPE.

Oh, thou canst not escape! my songs pervade
  The distance lying between us, and they fill
The sunny plain, the fields, the leafy shade!
  They ripple to thee in the rippling rill,
  They call unto thee from the gleaming hill;
They laughing claim thee as mine own for ever
  In spite of all that time can work of ill.
They cluster round thee, to forsake thee never;
Their plumes in the hazy air of August quiver;
  They follow thee throughout the silent deep
  Unfathomed dim abodes of awful sleep,
O'er tides of resonant sea and tides of river—
  Yea, one day they shall hold thee in strong hands,
  And bear thee forth a captive towards strange lands.

WHEN LOVE SHALL BIND.

When love shall bind at length thine errant soul,
  Thou shalt be mine beyond all need of song,
Beyond all speech—life's tides fast onward roll;
We leave behind full many a conquered goal,
  Climbing fierce upward heights with footstep strong.
It may be that no more my voice may sound
Soon for thee, no more these swift songs abound;
  No more thy feet bruise blossoms in a throng—
I reach at length the poets' mountain-ground
  Of three-and-thirty summers when they long
To pass, and do pass often, pale and crowned,
  Towards spheres where folly of earth no further wrong
Can work upon them; let my words have weight,
Spoken now ten years nearer death's sure gate.

TEN YEARS.

Ten years—ten years! What is it but a dream?
  A long strange dream of blossoms and of frost,
Blue skies and thunder, summer and a gleam
  Of heaven and love at times, as quickly lost
  As found—swift backward on black pain-waves tossed.
O what are ten years but one mortal spray
  Of meadow-sweet flung white against the tomb
  That gathers all sweet petals, pure perfume,
Into its hollow arms from day to day,
  Laughing as with cold teeth pale bloom from bloom
It severs, and the thin films faint away
  Into death's desolate nefarious gloom,
Joining the prisoners sweet in long array
  Whom year by year he gathers—to consume.

YET IN TEN YEARS.

Yet in ten years a high work may be done,
  Labour accomplished that shall put to shame
The swift departure of the vanquished sun,
  When the red waves receive on crests of flame
  The lingering arrows its last efforts aim.
For in ten years the meadow-sweet immortal
  Of song may crown and robe one much-loved name;
Yea, and the wings of song may through death's portal
  Bear, living and triumphant, one flower-form,
  Still beautiful and white, still breathing, warm.
In ten years, sweetheart, I have set thee high
In many hearts, so that thou shalt not die;
And lifted thee above the flickering breeze
Of earth, and spurned for thee death's vengeful seas.

A FLOWER UNTO MANY.

Thou dost not know the numberless sweet hearts
  To whom the gentle knowledge of thee came
Through the soft messages my song imparts:
Thou dost not know how many gold-tipped darts,
  Winged, beautiful, abundant, bright with flame,
  My soul, on fire with loving thee, doth aim
Against the steel-bound cuirass of the world,
  That so it might be pierced with utter shame,
In that it has not known and loved of old
  The name that I from height to height have hurled.
There is not any flower, with heart of gold,
  But hath in darkness of the summer night
  Whispered the name I've whispered, with delight:
Not "Rosalind" on oaks, but in God's palace
On gleaming, sacred walls, is written "Alice."

BEATRICE.

Yea, Beatrice, thou art—and I thy bard,
  Thy Dante—yet for once within the night
  I may thy true name whisper with delight;
And the soft cloak of poesy discard.
O, truly, lady gentle, it were hard
  Ever to call thee Beatrice, and sing thee
  Disguised, remote, unknown, obscure, nor bring thee
Forth to the triumph that slow years retard.

Beneath the silent, awful sky of morn
Vanish thou Beatrice—my love, be born!
Beneath the stars and hallowing calm of night
Shine thou with her one star, a star more bright!
Rose of sweet summer, lily of love's dream,
Swifter than her's thine English glances gleam!

THINE ENGLISH EYES.

Thine English eyes are sweeter than the day,
  More beautiful than light at early morn,
Tenderer than stars, or than the tender grey
  Of even when the moon's slow car is borne
  Upward by grey far propping waves forlorn :
Not Beatrice, in Italy the queenly,
  Flashed love, or mirth, or summer-lightning scorn,
So sweetly, or so rose-like and serenely.

The English breezes crowned thy young fair head,
And kissed thy lips, and made them roses red :
The English meadow-sweet purloined thy breath,
Blossomed immortal then, and laughed at death :
An English poet loves thee, and his hand
Crowns thee queen over queens in lyric land.

IF, AFTER DEATH.

If, after death, my singing may be heard
  Within the land of Shelley and of Keats—
The land that shook at vast-souled Milton's word,
  The land that every morn its Shakespeare greets,
  Smiling and proud—if this my land repeats
My lady's name, my song, when I am dead
Crowned am I then for ever—yea, the red
  Sunset of death as life eternal falls
  Beaming around me, summons in its walls
My spirit glad beyond all mortal measure
  Then at the great sweet death-voice as it calls;
Yea, if one song my land shall love and treasure,
  Then am I deathless in the high domain
  Whereover the dead deathless singers reign.

ALONG THE AGES.

How fair along the ages shine the flowers,
  Loved of the poets—tenderly we read
E'en in these modern passionless swift hours,
  The strain wherein great Dante's heart did bleed
  For Beatrice—we mark the eager speed
Wherewith his laurelled lady Petrarch sung—
  Then English minstrels softly did succeed—
Came gentle Spenser with the golden tongue
And the high sonnet-hymn of Shakespeare rung—
  Oh, that my chanting might add one flower more,
One blossom whose dear wholesome roots have clung
  To English soil, to blossoms loved of yore—
Rich were our women-blossoms in those days,
Yet eyes as sweet demand as passionate praise.

THROUGH THE FAR-OFF GATES.

O, wilt thou meet one day within the halls
  Of heaven the golden-haired, supreme delight,
Whose voice through Spenser's song to the ages calls?
  Wilt thou, my lady of the sea-glance bright,
  Take 'mid those heavenly bowers thy place by right,
Borne on the wide waves of my fearless singing
  Through time's vain-struggling armies clothed in night?
To-day thy soft arms unto me are clinging,
And in mine ears thy silver laugh is ringing,
  Lifted I am in spirit beyond all measure;
Lo! through the far-off gold gates I am bringing
  A new-born, heaven-august impassioned treasure;
I set my love, my lady of song, my bride,
In heaven, at Dante's Beatrice's side.

SONG.—THE MEADOW-SWEET SOUL.

Thou art the meadow-sweet, love,
  That bloomed anigh the rill
That flowed with ripples fleet, love,
  Through the green cloven hill—
But fairer than the flower,
And fragrant not one hour
  Alone, but through the ages vast and chill.

Thou art the white white rose, love,
  That blooms in summer's nest—
Just as its beauty glows, love,
  So gleams thy rose-white breast;
But sweeter than the rose,
And whiter than all snows,
  A flower than flowers more fair, than dreams
    more blest.

Thy soul is meadow-sweet, love,
  Thine eyes are starry rays—
The grasses kiss thy feet, love,
  The honey-suckle sprays
A honey-suckle sister
Losing, have sobbed and missed her,
Till on thy lips they've kissed her,
  There found more fragrant after many days.

HIGH THOUGHTS.

High thoughts and soaring impulse hath the age,
  Our age—our age of passion and of song—
Fierce warfare with untruth its warriors wage,
  Pitiless battle with each hoary wrong
  That sits miscrowned, with impious sceptre strong:
A rose thou art, and I the rose's singer,
  Yet will I with a spear-shaft supple and long
Amid the tilters at the tourney linger,
Then sweep again my harp with boisterous finger,
  Strengthened by battle 'mid the echoing lists—
Of battle's red bloom I will be the bringer,
  Yea, let my helm flame through the century's mists,
The helm of one who, unlike patient Keats,
Loved best where most the storm of battle beats.

LEAVING THE BOWER OF LOVE.

Leaving the bower of love, I seek the scene
  Where thought's mailed servants in their stout array
Drive with straight swords the opposing clouds between:
  O, at the dawning of a stormy day
  That breaks tempestuous over wastes of grey
We are living—yet within high thought's domain
  Are there not many gracious words to say?
What if the singer's robe with sanguine stain
Be wet, voice hoarsened from the battle-rain,
  Shall he not find more rest and sweeter after
When to his heart thy white form he doth strain,
  Thou image of white soft peace, and hears thy laughter
  Ringing high up towards many a gold hall-rafter
In love's delicious, bloodless, spotless fane?

REVOLUTION.

When blood-red Revolution in the air,
  Waveth her banner—when thought's streams flow deep
  Waking, loud-resonant, from their summer sleep—
When all the age one wide unrest doth share—
When the Republic's lions from their lair
  Emerge, and with their roar make cowards creep,—
  When vast ideas like cataracts overleap
The common bounds, and down the hill-sides tear :
  Then is love sweet ? Yea, sweeter than of old,
  When love's each whisper turned life's tides to gold !
  Yea, after battle softer is the rose
  Beside the wayside as the victor goes,
  Stiff, wearied, bleeding, wounded, towards his home,
  His lips yet crusted with red battle-foam.

FLOWERS OF THOUGHT.

Pale flowers of thought upon thy forehead white,
  Mixed with love's lustrous blossoms, I would set—
Not only passion's rich bloom, and the light
  Of lilies of soft dreams, and mignonette,
  And ferns with the earliest purest dewdrops wet ;
Not only these, but flowers of highest labour
  Won where the swiftest-wingèd tempests fret
The rocky hills, and smite with countless sabre
  The snow-fields and blue pinnacles of the ice—
Where thunder hath the lonely moon for neighbour
And not one faintest beat of valley-tabour
  Throbs up on dim mist-pinions as they rise—
Wonderful gentians from thought's furthest mountains
My soul would bring, and drops from star-kissed fountains.

MY ROSE OF THE VALLEY.

Wilt thou, my Rose o' the valley, my divine
  Sweet tender soft-lipped quiet valley-rose,
Around thy brows for wreaths the high mists twine,
  And with me pierce the fathomless far snows,
  Testing a land no previous lover knows?
Yea, shall we leave the trodden lower valleys
  And towards the land the rising sun-flame shows
Turn sure swift steps, and thread its icy alleys,
And brave the passes whence the north-wind sallies
  With pure delicious cold untrammelled breath,
Where with the mountain-peaks his brides he dallies,
  Whose kissing lips to mortal brides are death.
Yea, shall I kiss thee with the north-wind's mouth,
Rather than amorous dull lips of the south?

THE UTMOST HEIGHTS.

Art thou so strong, O lady of the vale,
  That thou canst dare the utmost heights with me,
And the utmost blue-grey mountain peaks assail,
  Thy foot not trembling, nor thine heart nor knee,
  Thy spirit longing not to turn nor flee?
Oh, wilt thou through the iron passes follow
  Making their rocky upright sheer sides ring,
Not fearing lest their awful black gulfs swallow
  The gentle laugh that like a flower doth cling
  To their precipitous steeps, and the sweet thing
Be no more heard amid the endless hollow
  Grim laughless palace of the pale ice-king—
Canst thou, O rose of valley-passion, dare
With me to tempt this rose-embittering air?

THE SOUTH-WEST WIND.

Yea, for thou art the fragrant South-west wind,
  Its gentle whisper in the summer trees,
Its gentle rustle of the sultry blind
  Of summer—what doest thou on mounts that freeze,
  Yea, what hast thou, my sweet, to do with these
High rocks that scorn and choke thy summer laughter?
  If thou dost venture from thy green calm leas
Then of a surety thy step Death stalks after,
  And soon will tremulous shudders shake thy knees
  And dissolution thy white body seize—
O South-west wind of mine be wise, nor follow
Thy singer upward when the white mists swallow
His fast-receding form—not all Apollo
  Hath shod with sandals stormier than the breeze.

THE HIGH THUNDER.

When the high thunder shakes along the crest
  Its lightning like fierce sanguine-tinted plumes
Abide in peace—yea, in thy valley rest.
  This fire of God earth's blossom-heart consumes :
  When through the thunderous canopy forth looms
The white august unkindled mountain-top,
  Unscorched and laughing,—where the green earth blooms
Far from the lightning do thou, sweetheart, stop,
Nor tempt the swift forked fire to rake thy crop
  Of golden quiet corn,—but let me soar
Up to blue regions whence the wild larks drop
  Unable, even they, one blue yard more
To traverse—then the eagles' wings I'll take,
And meads and creeds of earth for e'er forsake.

BRIDE OF THE EAGLES.

Or wilt thou dare the height, and be my bride,
  Bride of the eagles, loftier than the lark
Upsoaring, through the tremulous bright tide
  Of air at dawn, or through the sundered dark
  Wherein the moon a red fierce floating spark
Swims, and it dims the darkness round our heads,—
  And now far upland voices sound, and hark !
Close to us seem the star-embroidered meads
Through which the chariot of the four winds speeds—
  Yea, thine shall be the gentle west wind's crown—
I am the wind that rustles 'mid the reeds
  In harsh December, shakes earth's turrets down—
Thou art the west wind, sweet, and I the north—
With wedded splendid breath we sally forth !

WEDDED WINDS.

Pour thou thy breath along the rose-hung lanes,
  Sweet west wind—pass through fragrant Italy—
  Yea, linger over many a perfumed sea
Whose waves the deathless southern sunset stains.
But as for me where the high north wind reigns
  I'll reign, and with keen tides of purest breath
Sweep over ice-bound lands and frozen plains
  Where all is silent in consummate death :—
But join thou unto mine thy fragrant hand,
And I will with thee seek thy southern land,—
Yea, thou shalt melt and bless my iron-bound north,
And I with thee through flowers will sally forth,
Brace, not destroy, thy southern sweetest rose,
While thou shalt shrink not from, but melt, my snows.

SONG.—TOGETHER.

Through the wild world together,
Through summer scented weather
  Like winds, we'll sally forth—
And I will be the breeze
At whose touch glaciers freeze
  In the strange lands of the north:
But thou shalt be the west wind,
The gentle rose-caressed wind,
The balmy-breathed and blest wind
  That gladdens green soft leas.

O we will wait for lovers
Within the hazel covers,
  And whisper in their ears;
And thou shalt teach the roses
Each summer month discloses
  Young flower-like hopes and fears;

And I will gently carry
The wings of birds, and marry
The sighing flowers, and tarry
  To soothe a snowdrop's tears!

O wilt thou then, dear west wind,
Within thy white soft breast, wind,
  Gather the wings of me:
That in the end my lonely
Pain be faint memory only,
  Like cloud upon the sea
That fadeth at the breaking
Of morning—so mine aching,
Sweet west wind, from me taking,
  Mingle mine heart with thee.

THE FLOWERS OF ANCIENT WORLDS.

The flowers of ancient worlds whereof we see
  No traces, have not died nor wholly past:
  They flung their perfume on the wide free blast
While living—then they fled from vale and lea
  And their sweet tender fragrant spirits were cast
Into the tender women-souls whom we
  Behold and worship; not one long-lost rose
  But in the sweet mouth of some woman blows:
Not one dear blossom in some far land hilly
But now shines forth white-handed—yet a lily.
They are not changed—save only that they bloom
  Sweeter, and with a lovelier soft calm,
And all the world, for one small vale, perfume;
  One woman hath rose-lips, a lily-palm
Another—and the crocus-crown of gold
Shines forth in bright locks, splendid as of old.

II.

Then what wast thou ? In what far land didst thou
  Blossom—what region splendid from thy breath
  Triumphed thenceforward over night and death—
What lily was the white calm of thy brow ?
Art thou a lily or a grand rose now
  Or some unearthly flower too sweet to name ?
  Yea, from what strange dim shadowy woodland came
Thy spirit; thou art flower-sweet—whence or how ?

Who saw thee blossoming in the lonely vale
With thine own soft surpassing sweetness pale—
  Who watched thee, sweetheart, centuries ago ?
Was I the wind who kissed thee, or the stream
Within whose ripples did thy petals dream,
  Or leaves which over thee cool shade did throw ?

III.

Yea, who could tell thou wast a woman then?
  Not thine own sister-flowers of sister-sweetness
  But not the same divine white flower-completeness,
For moulded thou wast to be loved of men,
  Yea, to be followed with all passionate fleetness.
  Was it God who watched, and marked thy holy meetness
To spring forth bud-like, tenderly expanding,
Into a woman's shape, superb, commanding,
  Bearing the old same fragrance in her limbs,
  The flower-like scent whereat the dazed sense swims,—
Yea, suddenly, is the shapely flower-stem standing
  Human, alive for aye, with breath that dims
All watching eyes—so sweet it is—with tears,
And voice like flowing ripples in all ears?

IV.

For, sweet, there is not any woman like thee!
  They are not flowers, these common shapes around,
  Nor sprang they sudden from enchanted ground!
Oh, how the old playful breeze, as if to strike thee,
  Charged, then withdrew with gentle, rustling sound
  When thou within green Paradise wast bound,
Not dreaming of thy coming days of earth,
  Or of these clinging songs, so firmly wound
About thy temples—knowing not of thy birth
That was to be, nor of thy woman-worth—
  Dreaming instead that thou wast but a flower
Whose gentle wings for ever should abide
  Within that far sequestered, silent bower,
Never becoming mortal's blossom-bride.

V.

Now, therefore, all my triumph is the greater
In that for me this splendid bud hath bent—
The greater, grander triumph cometh later,
With more within it of divine content.
What though the former blue, clear heavens were rent
With thunder, and the forked lightning flew
Like angry wings of vengeful angels sent
Sudden adown the piteous, shuddering blue?
What though the old glad skies of peaceful hue
Be gone for ever—yet, in front sublime
Delight waits, nobler than delights we knew
In early struggling days of love and rhyme:
For him who tarries—him who patient waits,
Bound open at the last heaven's inmost gates!

VI.

And then the old strange sleep that brought thy splendour,
O gracious woman-blossom-heart, so near,
Again shall brood with wings snow-soft and tender
About me, and thy whisper in my ear
Shall bid all dark clouds from my spirit clear;
Again the old unutterable wonder
On angel-pinions through the cloven sheer
Abysses nourishing the latent thunder,
Soft, shall descend—I shall say, "Thou art here"—
And all the immense heaped clouds shall part in sunder,
All dark wet mists that made earth's valleys drear,
And the great heavenly peaks shall flash out yonder.
Again through vistas of enchanted sleep
I shall be borne, gliding from deep to deep.

VII.

For have I not through troublous seasons waited,
  Soothing my lonely spirit with my song,
A warrior worn with fight, a bard belated,
  Weary with woes, a tempest-winged throng,
  And endless adverse foam-crowned surges strong?
Have I not wandered through the forests dreary,
  Seeking the bud that to me did belong—
The blossom that I loved within the eerie
Old forest-walls before life, wingless, weary,
  Fell like a robe upon us, and we knew
The stifling vales of earth for the vast airy
  High meads, we sped on spotless pinions through
Ages before, at fateful birth, we died,
Life severing me from my celestial bride.

VIII.

This is the mystery, and this the glory
  That no man apprehends his wedded queen,
Nor knows her past, nor understands her story—
  Oh, all strange blossoms over poets lean,
And poets' ears with multitudinous voices
  Are filled—their eyes are dazzled with the sheen
Of viewless wings—their trembling soul rejoices
  At heavenly raiment, half-revealed, half-seen;
O mystic lady of the viewless wood,
Now that on actual earth thy feet have stood,
Art thou not frightened—wilt thou flee away,
Nor let me guide, as gentle as a ray
Of sunlight or of moonlight, o'er the foam
Of life thy steps towards our ancestral home?

IX.

For long enough on earth I've waited sighing,
  Cold, lonely, weary—nursing my sad heart
  In silence and in misery, apart,
Fainting for lack of thee—enduring, dying.
Now unto me come, winged at length and flying—
  Tarry no more, now these songs smite thine ear.
O love, thy new-found subtle pinions trying,
  Seek me, and with the old voice silver-clear
  Say unto me, "Lost sweetheart I am here!
Thou hast done enough—now let us rest and sleep,
  Forgetting all the past, its every fear,
Its every horror—plunging in the deep
  Of God's eternal passion-breakered sea
  That waits to swallow and mingle you and me."

X.

Then over us that sea with splendid waves
  Foaming, divine, triumphant, shall be borne—
Fast-swallowing all the former sins and graves,
  Yea, every sorrow and agony forlorn—
  Then through its new birth to the golden morn
Of heaven we shall pass—*one* wingèd spirit
  Never again to be divided—torn—
With all wide heaven to traverse and inherit,
  Quitting for ever the dim, loveless land,
And pacing through the old meadows found again
  Quiet and calm, and crowned, and hand in hand—
Till even at last love's unchanged perfect fane
  We enter—and there floats around our feet
  Dust as of immemorial meadow-sweet

SONG.—THOU WAST A BLOSSOM.

Thou wast a blossom by the deep
Still rivers that in heaven sleep ;
  Thou wast a white bud then—
Thou camest forth to fling thine arms
And all thy flower-sweet, countless charms
  Around the hearts of men.

Who loveth thee, he loves, indeed,
For many a year without love's meed,
  For who can win a flower ?
But when the sweet day comes he takes
A bride more pure than bloom that shakes
  Upon the bride's own bower.

As soft as blossoms in the breeze,
Her soft, white unclothed form he sees,
  Her fragrant utter soul—
And while he folds about her wings
Triumphant, all his spirit sings,
  Touching love's kingliest goal.

ALL DREAMS.

All dreams of splendid music and of love
  Shall be summed up, sweet gracious lady, in thee—
All hopes of youth, all visions from above,
  All power of song, all strength of purity,
  All wonder of soft moonlight on the sea
And majesty of noontide, and the calm
  And bounty of unutterable night;
The ripple of the slow tide's evening-psalm,
  And the great glory of the wakening light;
  The countless golden crowns whose starry might
Pervades the utmost heavens, and the pure winds
  That churn the seething waters into white;—
All these wide realms of Nature thou dost sway;
The waters woo thee, and the storms obey.

II.

Thou bring'st me thus the strange unspoken power
  Of all the universe. I hear its song
From star and stormy blast, from sun and flower,
  From ripples of the lake, and from the strong
  And white-lipped breakers, as one gleaming throng
They pour their serried might upon the beach;
  Yet loving these, I do mine own no wrong,
For far past Nature unto her I reach,
Hearing the sweet streams in her silver speech,
  And marking in her bosom the white bloom
Of every perfect rosebud—yea of each
  The intense enthralling mystical perfume:
She owneth Nature, and her breath pervades
The avenues of lime and hawthorn glades.

III.

Yea, so I do no treason to my love—
  Nature is everything yet nought to me;
  The widespread splendours that I used to see
In Nature now around her presence move.
  Nature we greet with rapture and with glee
In youth; but when once woman has been born
Rises with her a new sun at the morn,
  And all is changed for us eternally.

If any man with marvellous joy has slept
  With face pressed tight on roses and has waked
  While every sense with over-sweetness ached,
And his eyes with utter over-rapture wept,
  Shall he to-morrow the old weary way
  Pursue—rose-gladdened, not be fresh as they?

IV.

So knowing Woman man becomes a new
  High being—Nature fadeth, and her limbs
  The new-born goodlihood of woman dims,
For she includes herself and Nature too.
Not any dazzling heaven of utmost blue,
  Or sea of curling waves with azure rims,
  Is bright as woman's tender gaze that swims
With passionate tears, with passionate lustrous dew.

If any man be poet let him steep
His soul in woman as in fragrant sleep,
  Or as in perfect springs of crystal water;
Alpha and Omega is she—the last
And sweetest flower within our planet cast—
  God's first white spotless sceptred sovereign daughter.

V.

Thee knowing thus, I pass beyond the gaze
  Of Nature and of all the world around,
And tread with thee the unseen heavenly ways,
  And hear the unseen heavenly harp-strings sound,
  No more by earthly chains impeded, bound.
Thou art the power behind the natural veil
  Of things—upon the night thy locks unwound
Stream forth, and I pursue thy figure pale
As slow from star to star thy pinions sail
  Along the impurpled dark, and I can dream
So sweetly of thee that my dreams avail
  To bring thee towards me, and thy kisses seem
To rest upon my lips this very night,
Warm and impassioned, dew-soft, violet-light.

VI.

Yea, after all these lingering lonely years—
  These years while thou hast waited far away,
How great a thing, how sweet a thing appears,
  That this sweet night with me thy soul doth stay,
  And thou art tender, nor dost answer "Nay"
To the immemorial and untold desire
  Denied through many a night and many a day;
Now with redoubled passionate fierce fire
I wait thee, flinging from mine awestruck lyre
  At length the glad sounds of a marriage hymn;
No more the words are tearful and aspire,
  Now rather as a robe thine every limb,
Thine hair, thy lips, thy soul, thy perfect face,
They wrap themselves round swiftly, and embrace.

VII.

This night thou tarriest with me; not on wings
  Evasive shalt thou this night cleave the gloom—
  Rest here, a gold-winged angel in my room,
And white-winged woman-spirit whom time brings
Ready at last to him who waits and sings—
  Lo! thou art risen at last, love, from thy tomb,
  Beautiful, glad, a flower in perfect bloom,
And in mine ear thy wedded whisper rings.

"Lo! I am coming—let the feast be ready,
The wedding furnished, and love's gold flame steady
  I' the air—lo! now at last, in no sweet dream,
In mine own robe of snowy woman-whiteness
I meet unshrinking, love, the fierce dear brightness
  That from thy loving, conquering eyes doth stream.

VIII.

"Yea, now I come, love, to be thine for ever—
No more to part—but through the wondrous night
To touch thee with my lips, too fond to sever,
Once having touched—and with my sacred white
Glory of womanhood thy pure delight
To be—see how the stars in sacred gladness
Share now our joy with countless glances bright!
Cast off thy past immeasurable sadness!
And reach thine hand forth and take tender hold
Of mine hand, husband—husband from of old;
And lead me into regions never seen
Of mortals, where we rule as king and queen,—
Cling to me—burn throughout me with thy face,
And strong keen lips on mine no less keen place!"

IX.

So said she, and the far glad ether trembled,
  And swift along the hills ran crimson light—
The waves laughed out for gladness nor dissembled,
  In the deep utmost valleys it was bright.
  But over us was sacred star-sown night,
As yet—that holy veil of love we enter,
  And like a floating moon her body white
Seems of that mystic universe the centre ;
  Now is my song completed, for no more
  Pale words pursuing ripple on the shore
  Of thought, but only words of worship throng
  The final vestibules of sinking song,
  And only thoughts of utter gladness fill
  The spirit whose wild throbs will soon be still.

X.

Still, for the heart of woman giveth peace—
  Peace in the end, and blessing, not sharp woe.
The days of passionate fierce seeking cease,
  Wherein our pierced feet wandered to and fro,
  Seeking her beauty whom at length we know
Eternally our own—the trodden places
  Now far behind us redden at the glow
Of morning, as the red sun's chariot races
Along the arch of sky, and hot-wheeled chases
  The white-wheeled timorous chariot of the moon :
Now watch we, smiling, in each other's faces
  A light that shall be deathless glory soon,
When, spirits eternal, we become a part
Of God's own deathless, passionate, sweet heart.

SONG.—GOLD-WINGED SPIRITS.

Two gold-winged spirits went
Towards heaven well content:
  In fiery dream
  To blend they seem,
And the veil of heaven was rent.

Then through and through
The gleaming blue
  These wedded spirits passed,
  Till they reached God's throne at last,
And God's own rapture knew.

Rapture supreme, unending,
For ever downward sending
  Love-glory like a gleam;

And the crown upon the man
Was a wreath, so sweet, so wan,
  Of the old flower of love's dream,

The meadow-sweet she gave
On earth's side of the grave—
And the crown upon the bride
Was the pain-wreath scarlet-dyed
  Of the lover by her side.

IN LIFE, OR IN DEATH?

IN LIFE, OR IN DEATH?

NO ENDING.

O, not for him who loves is there an ending
  To song, or to imagination's flight!
The bow of fancy stronger grows by bending,
  And fiercer the poetic fiery might
  As death's vast sunless breakers loom in sight:
More wonderful the soft thin-petalled rose
  That golden-centred, pink or pearly-white,
Spangled about the lush green June-hedge blows;—
  Truly we know not where we pass to soon;
  To loveless lands devoid of sun or moon
  Or stars it may be, where no woman speaks,
  And never new-born passion dyes the cheeks;
  Therefore our lyre with double force we sweep
  Ere life makes way for death, and song for sleep.

POETS MANY AND FAIR.

For poets many and fair who came before us,
  Have shot their bolts—have sung their song and
    passed;
Their faces from the eternal heaven bend o'er us,
  Their voices mingle with the storm-winged blast.
And we, too, swift as time our plumes can carry,
  Are seeking death's unlyrical dim sea;
Not one by love or strength may pause or tarry;
  O Beatrice, death waits for you and me.

How far away will all our labour seem,
When men look back as to a thin small gleam
  Watched over multitudinous crests of foam;
When centuries have passed and we shine small
As stars seen through some open ruined hall—
  When new feet o'er our hills and meadows roam.

IN PLACE OF THEE.

Yea—what of England, then? What hands shall weave
  Crownals for lovers? or what voices sound
Triumphant in the morn, or soft at eve?
  Round what bright brows shall lily-buds be bound?
  In what black tresses the red rose-bud wound?
What eyes shall then outshine the shining sea?
  What white feet tremble o'er the grassy ground?
The small white clover-blossoms still will be
  Strewn starlike o'er our cliff-top—who shall stand
  Watching the wide sea from it, hand in hand?
  Whose eyes shall pierce, as ours pierced, the far foam,
  Yearning to travel to some island-home
  Beyond the fading sunset—who shall be
  Set thereon by the years in place of thee?

IN PLACE OF ME.

And what glad bard in place of me shall sing—
  Shall round the brows of what fair woman twine
His tribute, be it of autumn leaves or spring
  Snowdrops, or dark-green tresses of the pine,
  Or yellow-white adhesive eglantine?
What ripple of music shall the far seas hear?
  What tune the white waves echo line on line
As o'er the old golden sands they stream in sheer
Unpliant armies of approach, with clear
  Wide rings of foam—what harp-strings through the night
Shall reach what woman's downbent listening ear?
  What window shall frame Juliet's shoulders white?
What face as fair as thy face—*can* it be?
Shall flash responsive to the future sea?

THE FACES OF THE FUTURE.

Will there be any loving song as clear,
  As firm, as sure, as eager, as prolonged?
As loud a lover for as sweet an ear?
  As many hymns of worship as have thronged
My harp, through many a sorrow-burthened year?
  Would that my spirit but for one strange night
  Might pierce the future with keen vision bright—
For but one hour the future's singing hear!

Would that I might for but one moment see
  The faces of the future and the flowers
Set on those distant shores in place of thee:
  Yea, plunge hot-handed 'mid the future's bowers,
And join its unawakened revelry,
  And mark its streams, its towns, its golden towers!

SHOULD I NOT RETURN ?

Then should I not return, O love, to thee,
  Finding none other bride by no far stream ;—
No voice that burns the soul with ecstasy,
  No web of passion sweeter than a dream ?
  Should I not, swift-returning, shortly seem
Upon our moonlit cliff-top to alight,
Spreading broad spirit-pinions weird and white,
  That strangely in the moon-rays, vaguely, gleam ?

Should I not laugh to think that I had dared
To search the future, when that future, snared
  And captured, sweet within thine hands doth lie ?
Should I not smile, returning, at the thought
That, foolish, I through future lands had sought
  To rid me of the inevitable sky ?

THE CERTAIN SKY.

For thou dost brood as certain as the sky,
  As sweet, as sure, above me; and thy glow
  From sacred morn till eventide dost throw
About me, and within thine hands I lie
When the still breath of eventide doth sigh—
  If through the future, winged and swift, I go,
  Thou art within that future, sweet—and lo!
I fare no better, if death's door I try;

For thou art there within that solemn gateway,
White, fair as ever, and the same—and straightway
  I feel upon my brow the pulse of wings;
The old rustle of the old same plumes sonorous,
The sweet wings' same soft pure air-winnowing
    chorus;
  No change, but closer prison and glad, death brings.

DEATH TRANSFORMED.

Yea, all the face of death, death's bosom, changes;
  I pass amid his broad imperious wings;
The warrior black who all the black night ranges
  Is as a maid whose red mouth laughs and sings.
  About me his resistless arms he flings,
But they are soft as woman's, and his face
  As woman's, and his breath about me clings
As woman's—and the whole strange dim-lit place
Seems like a lawn, a gladsome grassy space:
  "So this is death," I said, and as I spoke,
Death's arms were bent my body to embrace,
  Round me they folded like a lissome cloak,
And in the eyes of death so sweet a thing
I saw revealed, it made my spirit sing.

DEATH'S TENDERNESS.

Yea, when death touched me tender was his breast
  As thy breast in the vision long ago;
Within the billow of sleep I sank to rest:
  Tides crystal-clear above my head did flow.
  Absolute peace for almost utter woe
Clothed all my spirit in harness like a flame:
  My head sank back, and, sinking backward, lo!
The old immeasurable fragrance came,
The scent of blossoms with no mortal name,
  And wrapt me in a regal incense-cloud,
And seemed my very inmost soul to claim,
  Bearing it upward in a royal shroud
Through skies, past stars, past suns, past moons and seas,
Beyond the birthplace of the purest breeze.

THE SKY-GOD'S HEART.

Beyond the birthplace of the purest breezes,
  Beyond the regions of the faintest stars,
High up, till the earthly strained eyeball ceases
  To follow our flight—beyond all chains and bars—
Beyond the scent of every gentle flower
  Of earth—beyond the secrets of the rose—
Beyond love's glimmering green-woven bower—
  Beyond the whiteness of the unstained snows—
Beyond the voices soft of man and maiden—
  Beyond all rivers' tongues, all children's tones—
Beyond the dim porch honeysuckle-laden—
  Beyond yon church's white array of stones—
High up, high up, till thou and I, apart,
Drink of the fulness of the sky-god's heart.

SONG.—LIFE IS NOT LONG.

Life is not long; wilt thou not come to me?
Behold the sun hath sunk behind the sea,
And night is whispering in yon aspen-tree,
And the green leaves will glitter in the moon
Ere long, and night's harp wake night's loving tune:
Life is not long,
Death's waves are strong—
Come to me soon!

Come to me soon, O sweetheart—I am vext
By sorrows bitter-winged, and sore perplext—
Let us in this life, sweet, begin the next!
Is it worth while to wait the golden moon
Of heaven? Oh, love me, grant me passion's boon
Here while I pray,
Ere close of day—
Flee with me soon!

Oh, life is briefer than the rose's day;
Come, sweetheart—lo! I call thee—come away;
Duty is love with us—sin is delay;
Give me thy life, thy being, here—the moon
Will wrap the heavens ere long in one sweet swoon,
Heal me and save,
This side the grave—
Dwell with me soon!

LIFE AND DEATH.

Yea, is not life a nobler thing than death,
Far nobler? Shall we wait till all is lost,
Till life's frail vessel. wave-struck, tempest-tost,
Sways, creaks and shivers, at the ice-wind's breath?
Are there not sacred garlands to be won
This side the red waves wherein sinks the sun?
Oh, need we 'neath the languorous moon of night
With idle fingers weave love's garland bright?

Doth not the high God lead us towards each other,
Saying, "Work not only—love too, while 'tis day!"
Shall we the throbbing intuition smother,
Which, endless, irrepressible, doth say,
"To perfect duty, love is perfect mother;
Fold not your joy in harsh death's plumage grey!"

SWEET LIFE.

Sweet life yet lies before us—fair and wide.
  Oh, tarry not till every rose is blown,
  Yea, till the utmost grassy meads be mown,
And flat the corn-fields stretch on every side.
In life, through death, in heaven, be my bride,
  But first in life; how little can we say
  What waits beyond the horizon of to-day?—
Sorrows, delights, vast growths of soul, untried.

May I not pluck ere yet the hollow tomb
  Rings with my last song, one immortal wreath,
  Too sweet, too tender, and too pure, for death?
Shall not, one night, thy spirit through the gloom
  Float star-winged, saying—"Thy reward is here;
  Long ere thy petals of young life wax sere."

THE FLOWER OF MY SINGING.

Wilt thou not be the flower of all my singing?
  It needeth, now, a sacred living queen
  Who may with tender apprehension lean
Above the fervent scroll the years are bringing.
Lo! tired I am of idly upward flinging
  Love-songs, love-sonnets, into empty air!
  Bend forward thou, sweet—let me crown thy hair
With soft song-tendrils delicate and clinging.

O, let us no more move as separate souls
  Through the wide wintry world, but move along,
  Joined hands, hearts, voices, one linked wave of song
That towards the waiting golden heaven-gate rolls;
  Make me with pressure of thy dear white hand
  Proudest of proud kings crowned in singing land.

SOUTHERN LANDS.

Oh, seek we southern lands and southern skies;
  Let us within the blue Italian weather
  Build us a bower of love and dwell together;
Foolish too long, at last mature and wise.
Lo! unto thy then ever-present eyes
  Far sweeter songs I'll sing, and tenderer,
  Than when the long-loved soft love-glances were
Remote—and as remote the lips' replies.

Oh, fly with me across the echoing foam,
To God, to heaven, to love, to me, sweet—*home.*
Let not the dull and unimpassioned meads
Of England, where one in ten thousand heeds,
Or hardly that, love's low soft-rustling wings,
Longer retain thee, sweet, and him who sings.

GREATNESS.

Let us be great, and love, though all the world
  Rose up against us, shall we be alone?
  Then all the wide earth for one fitting throne
We'll take; our wings of flight shall not be furled
  Till the far southern azure is our own,
  Yea, hills by the grey olives overgrown:—
Earth's famous cities, sweetheart, we'll explore—
  Hear the blue Adriatic's lulling tone
And the white-waved Atlantic's wrathful roar;
Tread where sweet Keats and Shelley trod of yore,
  And make of many a wilderness a bower—
  Till, gladly, at the appointed wondrous hour,
  We reach a Paradise where each high dream
  To greet us in some living shape doth seem.

AND DOST THOU DREAD?

And dost thou dread the fool-scorn of the world,
  Its fool-laugh? Am not I, thy lover, here,
And shall not every foe be backward hurled?
  Can we not, living and triumphant, steer
  A joyous course with not one mortal near,
For are we not the spirits of the breeze
  Immortal, and o' the heavens crystal-clear
And of the swift unconquerable seas?
Have we not in us all the force of these—
  And is there any human spirit to dare
Oppose the invulnerable thing we please—
  Are we not girt by armour of high air?
Have we not this my sword of song divine,
Along the serried foes to smite and shine?

THY CROWN.

Shall men not look back wondering, and declare
  "Here was one woman-spirit free and great;
A woman who could utterly once dare
  To link her sweet unsullied life and fate
  Unto a poet's, and to hurl time's gate
Aside"—oh, shall not some far higher crown
  Be thine than jewels; or rich massive weight
Of gold—the future shall fling garlands down,
Nor shall thy name in the shifting eddies drown;
  Women shall love thee; poets shall adore
Thy beauty, and if these leaves I bring turn brown
  And wither, singers shall weave thousands more
Into a chaplet that no time shall spoil,
Nor any dust of desecration soil.

THE STARS ARE BECKONING.

Therefore, be bold. Turn not to watch the foam
  In boiling venturous swift swirls at our feet;
Lift thou the rather all thy bright gaze home,—
  Yea, mark our future of high triumph, sweet,
  The limitless glad leagues of golden wheat
Waving—the leagues of joyous flowery plain,
  The land of promise whither we retreat,
Our plumes of venture void of any stain,
To dwell for ever in love's pure domain:
  Weary I am of waiting; come thou, love—
The stars are beckoning, and the sweet mists cling
  The azure-folded mountain-tops above;
Awake thou first—then sleep thou, while I sing
And touch thine eyes with soporific wing.

REST.

Is this not rest? Is this not sweet, O lady!
After the weary years, the long sad gleam
Of sunburnt, bitter life,—now in the shady
Cool house of quiet love to rest and dream?
Sleep while I watch—lo! how the white moon-
beam
Falls on thy face and glorifies its sweetness,
Till heaven-pure and soft the features seem!
Ready to pass to heaven in angel-meetness:
Lo! now at last the incarnate God reveals
Himself, Herself, in thee; and thou dost bring
The flowers of heaven in thy breath and wing,
And in thy voice the voice of God now peals
Forth silver-soft,—thou art ready to be slain—
Ready to die from earth, in heaven to reign.

THY SPLENDID FACE.

Thy splendid face and splendid body sleeping
  Have in them all God's gift of womanhood:
Lo! as I watch thee, all my being weeping
  Sees all the issue of life, and finds it good.
  Upon how great a height my soul hath stood
Now once—upon how far a cloud-wrapped hill,
  Hearing God's voice bid all the wild waves rude
And all their countless foaming tongues "be still."
One we are made with the Eternal's will,
  Beautiful in its strength; we join our hands,
And, passing fast by many a soft-voiced rill,
  Yea, many a sweet-voiced memory of old lands,
We meet each other's eyes once—never more
Shall cloud of pain conceal the light they pour.

SONG.—SLEEP.

Sleep, sweetest, sleep—
  Let gentlest dew of slumber
  Fall on thee, without number
Let dreams be born and steep
Thy spirit in sweet sleep.

Sleep, sweet one, sleep—
  Lo! I will watch and sing,—
  Yea, shield thee with song's wing,
And thou shalt rest and reap
Reward of blessed sleep.

Sleep, let us sleep—
  Now am I weary too,
  Let perfect rest renew
Two spirits, slumber deep
Enfold us; let us sleep.